DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 812 CE 004 631

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TITLE Development of an Instrument for the Assessment of Parenting Attitudes. An Affective Evaluation Study: Parent Involvement Report Number 1.
INSTITUTION Mountain-Plains Education and Economic Development Program, Inc., Glasgow AFB, Mont.
PUB DATE Aug 74
NOTE 11p.; For related document, see CE 004 630

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Tests; *Child Rearing; Discipline; Evaluation; Individualism; *Opinions; *Parent Attitudes; Parent Child Relationship; *Questionnaires; Rejection
IDENTIFIERS *Mountain Plains Program

ABSTRACT

Development of the Child Raising Opinion Questionnaire to assess the attitudes of Mountain-Plains parents toward children was undertaken due to the inadequacy of other instruments in this area. Important factors in the development of the instrument were the parenting attitude of acceptance/rejection, the ability to perceive the child's individuality and "personhood", and parental resistance to learning about children and child raising techniques. The questionnaire, which is included in the report, consists of four scales: learning receptivity, discipline, indulgence dependency, and nurturance responsibility. The learning receptivity scale is designed to measure the extent to which a parent is receptive to learning about children, while the discipline scale measures the extent to which the parent believes in harsh authoritarian forms of discipline. Indulgence dependency is concerned with the extent to which the parent believes in indulging children; nurturance responsibility is related to the extent to which parents feel responsible for believing in tasks and behaviors which are nurturant and promote maximum development of the child. (EA)

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF PARENTING ATTITUDES

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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AN AFFECTIVE EVALUATION STUDY

PARENT INVOLVEMENT REPORT NO. 1

August, 1974

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This Study is a Product of the
Research Services Division

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CE004631

Introduction

The Child Raising Opinion Questionnaire was developed to assess the attitudes of Mountain-Plains students toward children. Its development was undertaken when it was ascertained that other instruments available in this area were inadequate due to deficiencies in concept and/or reliability. For example, one major test publisher's best offering in the area reported scale reliabilities in the fifities!

Development

Examples of the best available parenting questionnaires were obtained and examined in light of parenting theory and previous psychological assessments of the Mountain-Plains student population. It was determined that there was one major parenting attitude which underlay the issue--namely acceptance/rejection. Acceptance as used means a belief on the part of the parent that the child is an individual with rights and needs, and not an ego extension for the parent through which he fulfills himself by either exerting power (which the parent has not to his/her satisfaction in the real world) or giving "everything" (all the things the parent wants/wanted but did/does not have or cannot justify for himself/herself). The opposite of acceptance, rejection, is thus seen to have two major aspects--authoritarianism and indulgence. Scales assess each of these variables which are seen not to be independent concepts, but rather independent aspects of seeing the child as an ego extension.

A major indicator of seeing the child as an individual is endorcement of child centered behaviors which take into account the child's individuality and

"personhood". Such parents accept children and see them as persons for and to whom they are responsible rather than as objects for their own fulfillment.

Finally, experience at Mountain-Plains had shown that parents were resistant to learning about children and child raising techniques. It has been assumed that such resistance (which often also accrues to "marriage counseling") to a large extent results from the fact of "disadvantagement" that the disadvantaged population in general, and the least psychologically functional members of that population in particular, have in the process of chosing Mountain-Plains, been forced to admit to certain vocational and educational deficiencies. In order to maintain some self worth/identity they therefore adopt an attitude of "maybe my English ain't good an neither's my math and I can't do plumbing, but I know about marriage because I got one and so did my parents and I know about children because I was one and I got some". Therefore, in order both to test the hypothesis that those resistant to learning will be the least psychologically functional (i.e., that those with most need are least likely to cooperate) and to provide a scale for identifying resisters so that special attention can be given to the resistance variable, a receptivity to learning scale is included in the instrument.

Implementation

Fifteen items have been developed for each scale with the intention of reducing scale size to the ten most reliable items provided a minimum reliability (internal consistency) of 0.80 can be attained for each scale. The initial

instrument is designated Form E-1 as scales are experimental. As needed, subsequent editions of the instrument will modify item content to enhance reliability.

For purposes of initial reliability assessment and for construct validation of the scale items, the instrument is to be administered to a cross section of the Mountain-Plains student population. Subsequently, it will be administered to entering and exiting students and to a sample the week after completing parent involvement class to assess both the impacts of the class and the interactive nature of the offering with other Mountain-Plains elements.

Scale Descriptions

A. Learning Receptivity. This scale is designed to measure the extent to which a parent is receptive to learning about children. High scores are persons who percieve a need for assistance in coping with children and are probably receptive to learning. Low scorers are "defeatists" and resistant to trying to learn about child needs and behaviors.

B. Discipline. This scale is designed to measure the extent to which the parent believes in harsh authoritarian forms of discipline. Low scores are expected to characterize rejecting authoritarian parents who rely heavily on physical forms of discipline. Children of these parents are expected to be timid and fearful in dealing with adults and withdrawn from and/or agressive toward other children. Curiousity and initiative taking are expected to be low in children of low scorers.

C. Indulgence Denendency. This scale is designed to measure the extent

to which the parent believes in indulging children. Low scores are expected to characterize parents who use children as ego extensions to fulfill their own desires. Children of parents who engage in indulgence rejection are expected to be tempermental, demanding, and dependent.

D. Nurturance Responsibility. This scale is designed to measure the extent to which the parent feels himself responsible for/believes in tasks and behaviors which are nurturant and promote maximum development of the child. Low scores are expected to characterize parents who are nurturant, accept responsibility for promoting child growth and development, and who are generally acceptant of their child. Children of low scorers are expected to show generally favorable development.

Child Raising Opinion Questionnaire

Form E-1

Raising, disciplining, and child care in general is a controversal subject. Parents often disagree with each other, and so do the "experts". In order to help us find out more about Mountain-Plains student's ideas about raising children, please answer the questions in this booklet using your own personal ideas. There are no right or wrong answers in the usual sense. Rather, the correct answer in each case is your own personal belief.

Please anwer each question by marking the box on the answer sheet that most closely describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the item using the categories and definitions given below.

AC Agree Completely. I believe that the statement is true at all times and in all circumstances.

AM Agree Mostly. I believe that the statement is true most of the time and in most circumstances.

AS Agree Slightly. I believe that the statement is more true than false, but there are also many times and circumstances where it is false.

DS Disagree Slightly. I believe that the statement is more false than true, but that there are also many times and circumstances where it is true.

DM Disagree Mostly. I believe that the statement is false most of the time and in most circumstances.

DC Disagree Completely. I believe that the statement is false at all times and in all circumstances.

E 1-A, Learning Receptivity*

1. + Studying children is a waste of time.

2. + Dealing with children is a natural talent, it cannot be learned.

3. + Book ideas about kids will not work in real life.

4. + Children live in a world of their own that nobody understands.

5. - My parents made a lot of mistakes when they were raising me.

6. - I don't understand children very well.

7. + Teachers don't really know any more about kids than I do.

8. - You can learn a lot about children by watching them.

9. + The "experts" who write books about children would completely change their story if they tried to use book stuff on a real kid.

10. - You can learn a lot about people by watching the way their kids act.

11. + You must have children of your own in order to understand them.

12. - I need help in dealing with children.

13. - You can learn a lot about chilren by reading books about them.

14. - I need to learn more about children.

15. - You can learn a lot about children by talking to other parents.

*"-" Indicates reversed scoring for the item.

E 1-B, Discipline

1. Any time any child destroys any property he/she should be strongly punished.
2. Modern children talk back to their parents too much.
3. Discipline is the Father's responsibility.
4. Children owe their parents respect and obedience no matter what.
5. The most important thing to teach a child is discipline.
6. Parents own children just like they own their car or TV set.
7. A child should never question orders from a parent.
8. Parents do not need to explain why when saying "no" to a child.
9. Most of today's troubles are because people back in the 1940's did not discipline their kids.
10. The best idea anyone ever had about kids is the old saying, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."
11. Children who always obey grow up to be the best adults.
12. Children should do what they are told without arguing.
13. Children should never be allowed to stay up past their bedtime.
14. Most parents are too permissive and easy with their children.
15. The only really effective discipline method is spanking.

E 1-C, Indulgence Dependency

1. Parents should make their children the most important thing in life.
2. Children should not be assigned to tasks and chores until they are teenagers.
3. Parents should play with their children whenever the child asks them to.
4. If a child criticizes a parent, it is a sure sign that the parent is failing his responsibility as a parent.
5. Parents should sacrifice everything else for their child.
6. A child should share his parent's beliefs.
7. Parents should give their children as many gifts and toys as they can afford.
8. Parents should always have the kinds of food that their children like.
9. Parents should buy only the best things for their children.
10. Parents should choose occupations for their children.
11. Children should learn to be grateful for all the things their parents do for them.
12. A child's life should be made as pleasant as possible.
13. The worst thing that can happen in life is to have a child that doesn't show love to his/her parents.
14. Good parents overlook their children's shortcomings.
15. Friends and playmates are never as important to children as parents.

E 1-D, Nurturance Responsibility

1. Parents should help children develop their abilities.
2. Children need to feel that the things they do are important to their parents.
3. Parents should regularly find TV shows with educational value for their children to watch.
4. Children learn a lot from each other.
5. Children are people too, and thus have rights of their own.
6. Small children like to help adults who are working, for example, by carrying small things.
7. Children need to feel that they can accomplish things--even without their parent's help.
8. Reading to young children regularly is important.
9. Getting dirty is not only natural for kids, but good for them too.
10. Parents should teach children to do things themselves rather than doing things for them.
11. The best toys are those that are educational too-not just fun.
12. Children need to make and build things.
13. Children are individuals with needs and feelings which should be respected.
14. A child's curosity should be encouraged.
15. Children need encouragement.